



May 3, 2007

Secretary, Federal Communications Commission
236 Massachusetts Avenue, NE, Suite 110
Washington, DC 20002

RE: WC Docket No. 02-60, Rural Health Care Support Mechanism

On behalf of the North Carolina Healthcare Information and Communications Alliance Inc. (NCHICA), a nonprofit organization established by Executive Order of the Governor of North Carolina in 1994 “to improve health and care by accelerating the adoption of information technology,” we are pleased to write in support of proposals from organizations within the State of North Carolina to the Federal Communications Commission’s Rural Health Care Support Mechanism, WC Docket No. 02-60.

North Carolina is a large state characterized by high degrees of diversity in its geography, in its population and in their access to healthcare, connectivity and other technology-based resources. The usual challenges that accompany the uptake of new technologies and operations are compounded in the rural 85 of North Carolina’s 100 counties and over fifty percent of its population that are designated “rural”. Significant technical, economic, cultural, and educational barriers exist to enabling the delivery of critical telehealth services and web-based resources in rural regions of the state. This complex web of challenges points to the need for creative, even experimental approaches to resolving the rural telehealth digital divide that exists in much of North Carolina.

Extensive discussions with many of the principals of our rural health care and connectivity providers have led us to join with the e-NC Authority in proposing a collaborative effort to coordinate telehealth pilot projects across the state in an approach that that we believe can best leverage our resources and those of the FCC. We believe that coordinated and facilitated information exchange will contribute strongly towards development and testing of promising policies and models with potential for replication across the country. Specifically, a number of promising region-based efforts are being discussed across our state, including several of which are being submitted to the FCC for consideration. With an appropriate structure for information and technology exchange there is an opportunity here to leverage investment made in the individual projects through the creation of a structured approach to information sharing that will support the diffusion of lessons learned, emerging best practices and innovative applications developed.

The e-NC Authority and NCHICA want to provide a strong message to the FCC that NC has the ability to coordinate across regions to provide a secure, interoperable functionality in support of FCC pilot projects so that lessons learned can be shared and that the individual efforts are strengthened. Both the e-NC Authority and NCHICA have significant experience leading successful state-wide multi-partner collaborative efforts related to connectivity. We are jointly committed to applying the considerable technical expertise, management and organizational skills and our rich statewide networks of public and private partners to ensure the success of each of the individual projects being submitted to the FCC to improve health care in Rural North Carolina. Further, we are committed to working across these pilot projects to develop a statewide virtual collaboratory, a network of networks, that will support an integrated, information-rich statewide network of best practices.

Specifically, NCHICA will bring to the effort its experiences gained through its leadership and participation in the HHS Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology contracts for the development of the Nationwide Health Information Network and the associated Privacy and Security Solutions for Interoperable Health Information Exchange with AHRQ and the NGA's State Alliance for e-Health.

Functionality and deliverables that will be brought by e-NC and NCHICA to the FCC proposals from organizations in North Carolina include the following:

Creation: Contribution to the Planning process:

- Assist individual projects with technical support for connectivity planning, vendor evaluation, and implementation. For example, e-NC staff works with partners to identify connectivity options and alternative approaches, develop project specifications and budgets and develop RFP, advise during vendor meetings and quote evaluation
- Work with project teams to plan for applying proven models for community outreach and education to increase awareness and use of telehealth services that are being created.
- NCHICA and e-NC have worked with and received indications of interest and support from communications providers including ARINC, AT&T, Embarq, ERC Broadband, Internet2, MCNC/NCREN, SCANA, Time Warner Cable, and others who are expected to be interested in becoming involved with successful applicants. A number of those have written letters of support and are attached.

Coordination and Evaluation

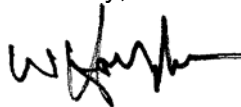
- Create a forum for collaboration across various telehealth projects across North Carolina to enable rapid transfer of emerging standards and best practices
- Host and facilitate regular progress meetings among various telehealth project groups
- Assist with development of rigorous evaluation metrics and processes for individual projects and for status of telehealth in the state overall
- Work with FCC to ensure distillation of lessons learned in highest-value format

Communication

- Attend regional and national meetings to help project teams present models being developed to broader audiences
- Develop and maintain electronic information exchange structures to support what is envisioned as a NC Telehealth Virtual Laboratory
- Work with state, regional and FCC leaders to identify appropriate standards and policy issues emerging from the collective of projects funded in North Carolina.

We look forward to working with the FCC to implement, support and evaluate pilot projects that support health and care in North Carolina in rural areas. We further commit our time, expertise and resources to ensuring that, if funded, the project's success will extend throughout NC and beyond.

Sincerely,



W. Holt Anderson
Executive Director

North Carolina Healthcare Information and Communications Alliance, Inc.

PO Box 13048, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-3048

919-558-9258 www.nchica.org



Connecting North Carolina to a Better Future

May 7, 2007

Secretary, Federal Communications Commission
236 Massachusetts Avenue, NE, Suite 110
Washington, DC 20002

Oppie N. Jordan
Chair

RE: WC Docket No. 02-60, Rural Health Care Support Mechanism

George Bakolia
John Bardo
Herb Crenshaw
Jim Fain
Craig Fowler
Billy Ray Hall
Jon R. Hamm
Lewis Hoggard
Joseph Hurd
Lee Mandell
Bo McNeill
Rhonda Raney
Rebecca Troutman

On behalf of the e-NC Authority we are pleased to write in support of proposals from organizations within the State of North Carolina to the Federal Communications Commission's Rural Health Care Support Mechanism, WC Docket No. 02-60. The e-NC Authority is a state agency established in 2001 to increase the awareness, access and ability of all North Carolinians to use the Internet and the resources it can deliver. We view telehealth as a critical component of the web-based services that must be made available to all of our citizens, so we applaud the FCC for the commitment represented by its Rural Health Care Support RFP.

North Carolina is a large state characterized by high degrees of diversity in its geography, in its population and in their access to healthcare, connectivity and other technology-based resources. The usual challenges that accompany the uptake of new technologies and operations are compounded in the rural 85 of North Carolina's 100 counties and over fifty percent of its population that are designated "rural". Significant technical, economic, cultural and educational barriers exist to enabling the delivery of critical telehealth services and web-based resources in rural regions of the state. This complex web of challenges points to the need for creative, even experimental approaches to resolving the rural telehealth digital divide that exists in much of North Carolina.

Extensive discussions with many of the principals of our rural health care and connectivity providers have led us to join with the NC Health Information and Communications Alliance (NCHICA) in proposing a collaborative effort to coordinate telehealth pilot projects across the state in an approach that that we believe can best leverage our resources and those of the FCC. We believe that coordinated and facilitated information exchange will contribute strongly towards development and testing of promising policies and models with potential for replication across the country. Specifically, a number of promising region-based efforts are being discussed across our state, including several of which may be submitted to the FCC for consideration. With an appropriate framework for information and technology exchange we will be able to leverage the investment made in the individual projects through the creation of a structured approach that will support the diffusion of lessons learned, emerging best practices and innovative applications developed.

The e-NC Authority and NCHICA want to provide a strong message to the FCC that North Carolina has the ability to coordinate across regions to provide a secure, interoperable functionality in support of FCC pilot projects so that lessons learned can be shared and that the individual efforts are strengthened. Both the e-NC Authority and NCHICA have significant experience leading successful statewide multi-partner collaborative efforts related to connectivity. We are jointly committed to applying the considerable technical expertise, management and organizational skills and our rich statewide networks of public and private partners to ensure the success of each of the individual projects being submitted to the FCC to improve health care in rural North Carolina. Further, we are committed to working across these pilot projects to develop a statewide virtual collaboratory, a network of networks, that

e-NC, the grassroots initiative to link all North Carolinians to the Internet, is led by the E-NC Authority.

Jane Smith Patterson
Executive Director

www.e-nc.org
1-866-NCRURAL

N.C. Rural Economic
Development Center, Inc.
4021 Cary Drive
Raleigh, NC 27610
(919) 250-4314
FAX (919) 250-4322

will support an integrated, information-rich statewide network of best practices.

Oppie N. Jordan
Chair

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Jane Smith Patterson
Executive Director

www.e-nc.org

1-866-NCRURAL

Specifically, e-NC will bring to the effort its experiences gained in catalyzing and coordinating innovative Internet-based economic and community development projects. Examples of these include an analogous effort in education and e-government arenas, as well as an award-winning statewide e-communities effort that springboarded 85 rural counties, several urban counties and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee toward a more connected future. The e-communities initiative was a yearlong effort that engaged each county in developing a grassroots-based, community-inclusive strategic connectivity plan. This major milestone to become certified e-communities resulted in a number of pilot applications that are being extended to other governments in our state and beyond.

Functionality and deliverables that will be brought by e-NC and NCHICA to the FCC proposals from organizations in North Carolina include the following:

Creation: Contribution to the Planning process:

- Assist individual projects with technical support for connectivity planning, vendor evaluation, and implementation. For example, e-NC staff works with partners to identify connectivity options and alternative approaches, develop project specifications and budgets and develop RFP, advise during vendor meetings and quote evaluation
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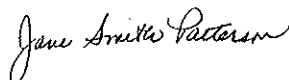
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We look forward to working with the FCC to implement, support and evaluate pilot projects that support health and care in North Carolina in rural areas. We further commit our time, expertise and resources to ensuring that, if funded, the project's success will extend throughout NC and beyond.

Sincerely,



Jane Smith Patterson
Executive Director

N.C. Rural Economic
Development Center, Inc.
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Internet2
Office of the President & CEO
1000 Oakbrook Drive, Suite 300
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(734) 913-4250
(734) 913-4255 (fax)
www.internet2.edu

May 1, 2007

W. Holt Anderson
Executive Director
North Carolina Healthcare Information and
Communications Alliance, Inc. (NCHICA)
3200 Chapel Hill/Nelson Blvd.
Cape Fear Building, Suite 200
P.O. Box 13048
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Dear Mr. Anderson:

On behalf of Internet2, I am pleased to write in support of proposals that the North Carolina Healthcare Information and Communications Alliance will be facilitating in response to the Federal Communication Commission's Rural Health Care Support Mechanism, WE Docket No. 02-60.

We understand that your organization will serve as a convening body to ensure that each proposal is able to coordinate with others, and to help create a comprehensive, standards-based framework to enhance interoperability within the state, between North Carolina and adjacent states, and eventually with the emerging Nationwide Health Information Network as a "network of networks." We are confident that these efforts and your organization's facilitative efforts will contribute to the improvement of healthcare statewide by accelerating the adoption of information technology to improve the lives of citizens, that the use of Internet2's high bandwidth network will provide access to unmatched content and support, and that the medical health care record-keeping will be greatly improved.

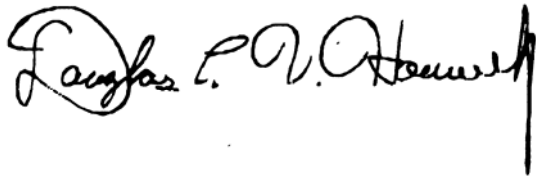
The proposal will utilize the new Internet2 Network and the regional networks to expand the telehealth infrastructure and provide high speed connections to all participants. By incorporating Internet2's middleware, security, and performance measurement tools, it also will provide secure exchange of medical records, permit remote access to expert diagnosis and treatment, increase cost-efficiencies by reducing costs associated with travel, and enhance training and research collaboration with secure multi-site videoconferencing. The use of Internet2's network not only will provide an effective, secure, and system for statewide and national telehealth and telemedicine, but also will ensure that training and other

integrated resources will be incorporated to optimize the network's utility. In doing so, the regional network that will be created will facilitate the exchange of reliable data, and digital image, voice, and video transmissions with quality to enhance real-time clinical consultation.

Internet2 is the foremost U.S. advanced networking consortium. Led by the research and education community since 1996, Internet2 promotes the missions of its members by providing both leading-edge network capabilities and unique partnership opportunities that together facilitate the development, deployment and use of revolutionary Internet technologies. The Internet2 Network and its member community innovations in middleware, security, educational networking, and partnerships with premier federal agencies such as NIH are uniquely positioned to deliver high performance, flexible, low-cost connectivity in support of healthcare needs on a sustained basis on the local, regional, state, and national levels. In the process, these partnerships are likely to expand technological capabilities, increase the range of geographical access to sophisticated treatment modalities, and redefine the parameters of disease diagnosis, treatment, and management.

We are pleased to offer our support for these initiatives, which will enhance the provision of telehealth and telemedicine services regionally and nationwide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Douglas E. Van Houweling". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end.

Douglas E. Van Houweling
President and CEO, Internet2



MCNC

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3021 Cornwallis Road
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
T (919) 248-1900 F (919) 248-1101
www.mcnc.org

May 3, 2007

W. Holt Anderson
Executive Director
North Carolina Healthcare Information and
Communications Alliance, Inc. (NCHICA)
3200 Chapel Hill/Nelson Blvd.
Cape Fear Building, Suite 200
P.O. Box 13048
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Dear Mr. Anderson:

On behalf of MCNC, I am pleased to write in support of proposals that the North Carolina Healthcare Information and Communications Alliance will be facilitating in response to the Federal Communication Commission's Rural Health Care Support Mechanism, WE Docket No. 02-60. We understand that your organization will serve as a convening body to ensure that each proposal is able to coordinate with others, and to help create a comprehensive, standards-based framework to enhance interoperability within the state, between North Carolina and adjacent states, and eventually with the emerging Nationwide Health Information Network as a "network of networks." We are confident that these efforts and your organization's facilitative efforts will contribute to the improvement of healthcare statewide by accelerating the adoption of information technology to improve the lives of citizens, that the use of Internet2's high bandwidth network will provide access to unmatched content and support, and that the medical health care record-keeping will be greatly improved.

The proposal will utilize the new Internet2 Network, MCNC's statewide NCREN network, and the regional networks to expand the telehealth infrastructure and provide high speed connections to all participants. By incorporating NCREN statewide network and Internet2's middleware, security, and performance measurement tools, it also will provide secure exchange of medical records, permit remote access to expert diagnosis and treatment, increase cost-efficiencies by reducing costs associated with travel, and enhance training and research collaboration with secure multi-site videoconferencing. The use of NCREN and Internet2's networks not only will provide an effective, and secure system for statewide and national telehealth and telemedicine, but also will ensure that training and other integrated resources will be incorporated to optimize the network's utility. In doing so, the regional network that will be created will facilitate the exchange of reliable data, and digital image, voice, and video transmissions with quality to enhance real-time clinical consultation.

In North Carolina, NCREN provides statewide access to Internet2. Led by the North Carolina research and education community since 1985, NCREN promotes the missions of its constituents by providing both leading-edge network capabilities and unique partnership opportunities that together facilitate the development, deployment and use of revolutionary Internet technologies. NCREN and its member community innovations in technology, middleware, security, educational networking, performance metrics, and partnerships with premier federal agencies such as NISS and NHC are uniquely positioned to deliver high performance, flexible, low-cost connectivity in support of healthcare needs on a sustained basis on the local, regional, and state levels.

We are pleased to offer our support for these initiatives, which will enhance the provision of telehealth and telemedicine services regionally and nationwide.

Sincerely,
John Killebrew
Director-NCREN
MCNC



Public Health
INFORMATICS
Institute

May 4, 2007

Dr. Phred Pilkington
Director of Public Health, Cabarrus Health Alliance
1307 S Cannon Boulevard
Kannapolis, NC, 28083

Dear Dr. Pilkington:

On behalf of the Public Health Informatics Institute I am pleased to offer our support and encouragement for your proposal to pilot a regional health network in North Carolina through the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) Rural Health Care Pilot Program.

Your year 1 and 2 goals seem to be within your reach and, in my opinion, represent the appropriate first steps for a planning year followed by a pilot project year. It is important that you develop sustainable technical and business models for the rural setting to support broadband connections between health providers and the public. I support your logical approach to selecting sustainable technical and business health applications that add value to providers and their rural patients: planning and selection of these applications as a year 1 focus and piloting of them as a year 2 activity. I'm pleased that you recognize the importance of marketing and training programs that are needed to assure appropriate adoption of the applications by healthcare providers and their patients— especially rural non-profit and public providers.

We understand that this proposal is consistent with and supportive of the other work being done by the Southern Piedmont Partnership for Public Health in the area of connecting public health with the public and other public health partners.

If this proposal is funded, the Public Health Informatics Institute will be as supportive as possible in your efforts. We would be pleased to participate in your process for defining the health-improving applications and would be pleased to review the business process models upon which your applications will be defined. To the extent we can offer advice we are also pleased to reviewing and commenting on marketing surveys needed in year 1 and with marketing/training efforts in year two.

I wish you the best of luck in pursuing this funding opportunity. You have a very worthy approach and well written proposal. We have enjoyed working with your excellent technical team on our national programs. I know they will deliver a solid effort for FCC's Rural Health Care Pilot Program.

Sincerely,

David A. Ross, Sc.D.
Director



May 3, 2007

W. Holt Anderson
Executive Director
North Carolina Healthcare Information & Communications Alliance
3200 Chapel Hill/Nelson Blvd.
Cape Fear Building, Suite 200
P.O. Box 13048
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Dear Mr. Anderson:

SCANA Communications, Inc. (SCI) is pleased to offer our support to applications for funding under the FCC's Rural Health Care Pilot Program facilitated by your organization. We are confident these grant applications, if awarded, will provide tremendous benefits to rural citizens of North Carolina.

As a regional long haul telecommunications carrier, SCI can provide high bandwidth connections to other regions of NC or other states, including providing connections to other similar projects. SCI will be happy to respond to an RFP that may result from the grant application for services we offer.

Please let us know how we can be of further assistance in this very worthwhile project.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Larry G. Vincent", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Larry G. Vincent
Manager, Sales, Marketing & Customer Service



May 7, 2007

Secretary, Federal Communications Commission
236 Massachusetts Avenue, NE, Suite 110
Washington, DC 2002

RE: WC Docket No. 02-60, Rural Health Care Support Mechanism

On behalf of ARINC, its Healthcare IT Infrastructure division and as a corporate member of NCHICA; I wish to convey our strong support for the e-NC Authority collaborative effort to coordinate telehealth pilot projects across the state of NC in an approach that can best leverage state health and telehealth resources.

ARINC is well aware of the great benefits of a collaborative network. For more than 75 years ARINC has served as a neutral third party that defined policies and interoperability standards for the global aviation market. We are also the industry's data exchange utility and have operated the communications network that supports it for over 25 years.

Our Healthcare IT Infrastructure team is dedicated to ensuring that the care providers and recipients in the health care market achieve comparable levels of communications availability to improve the access to and quality of care delivered nationwide. We are now delivering services to DIANA Associates to support their delivery of telemedicine and teleradiology services for their customer at the Department of Immigration Health Services.

As a company that desires to compete for the delivery of the local service connections to the network, ARINC is happy to submit this letter of recommendation for the e-NC Authority. Should you require additional information I can be reached at 443-254-0684 or email rldudley@arinc.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Raymond L. Dudley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Raymond L. Dudley
Director, Marketing & Sales
ARINC Healthcare IT Infrastructure
2551 Riva Road
Annapolis, MD 21401
Tel: 410-266-2195
Email: rldudley@arinc.com